

Gifted Children – The Intellectual Potential of the Country

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The article describes the psychological and pedagogical conditions of gifted personality of a junior pupil in the educational environment of contemporary schools. The author analyzes the key factors that influence the development of gifted individuals.

The problem of education and development of a healthy and harmoniously developed personality has always been urgent. The basic approach in the search for young talents should recognize complex actions: medical, physiological, psychological, educational which are directed to be performed by the family and school. It is also important to use a variety of methods to identify the interests and abilities of children and continue to monitor their further progress.

Scientists from different countries work at the problem of giftedness. Biologists try to identify genes of a genius, psychologists and sociologists invent thousands of tests to determine the brightest individuals. And yet the secret answer to the question why one person can manage much and the other is an outsider still remains a mystery.

Identification, support, development and socialization of gifted children are among the priority tasks of the modern school. The problem of giftedness in the education system is solved by the establishment of special schools for gifted and talented children, or opening special classes for gifted students. However, there is another solution to this problem – not to isolate a gifted child from its natural environment, to teach and educate without taking it away from the peers, creating conditions for the development and implementation of all creative abilities.

In psychological and educational literature, the problem of a gifted person is stressed in the writings of such scholars as I. Averina, A. Asmolova, V. Chudnovsky, B. Shadrikov, etc. A considerable amount of research is devoted to the phenomenon of a personal talent. Its nature and kinds, age characteristics are represented in the works of foreign scholars (J. Guilford, R. Cattell, J. Renzulli, B. Taylor, J. Freeman, etc.).

The problem of child's talent is one of the significant problems of modern science. There are over 100 definitions of the notion "talent." N. Leytes said: "*Talent is the ability to outstanding achievements in any socially important sphere of human activity.*"

The concepts of "talent", "child endowment", "gifted children", "creative person" define ambiguous approaches to the educational activities of the educational institution. On the one hand, every child is "gifted" and the main task of teachers is to disclose intellectual and creative potential of every child. On the other hand, there is a category of children who are qualitatively different from their peers, which usually require the organization of special training, development and education. A talented, gifted student is a person with a high level of ability. Such children usually do not

need to be forced to study, they themselves look for an activity – a complex and creative¹

Abilities are always noticed in a certain activity: science, art and education. Some people are gifted in mathematics, the second in the humanities, the third in painting, music and there are also people capable of different activities.

There are two levels of abilities: reproductive and productive (creative). The reproductive level of abilities is characterized by fact that people easily assimilate knowledge without efforts, easily accomplish new activities. While achieving high performance in activities the person, however, does not create anything new, acting in accordance with the model. The productive (creative) level of ability implies personal inventions, creations in the course of activity.

The highest level of ability is talent and genius. Achievements of talented people always have great social and historical significance for many generations. The genius opens a new era, creates a new direction in science, art and industry. The talent works within the nominated ideas that defined the direction. Scientists estimate that throughout the history of mankind there were not more than 400 geniuses, that is only one genius at each decade of society. It has also been estimated and the probability of capable people: 10% of people possess abilities higher than average, 2% can be attributed to the talents and 0.05% – to geniuses².

Abilities are considered as individual psychological characteristics that distinguish one person from another, upon which depend the possibility of successful activity. By giftedness we understand both qualitatively unique combination of abilities (individual psychological characteristics), upon which also depend the possibility of successful activity.

Sometimes abilities are considered innate, given by nature. However, scientific analysis shows that only inclinations can be innate and abilities are the results of development of inclinations.

Inclinations are congenital anatomical and physiological features of the organism. These include primarily the structural features of the brain, senses and movement organs, properties of the nervous system etc. Appearing on the basis of inclinations, abilities develop in the course of and under the influence of activity which requires of the person certain skills. Outside the activity no ability can get its development. Any person, no matter which inclinations she/he has, is unable to become a talented mathematician, a musician or an artist, without a relevant significant training and preparatory activity.

Abilities differ in quality, breadth, originality of combinations and degrees of development. Quality of abilities is determined by the activity, the condition of successful implementation of which they are. A man is treated not simply saying that she/he is capable, but capable of some activity, that is the quality of its abilities is indicated. In terms of quality skills can be divided into mathematical, technical, artistic, literary, music, sports and more.

No single capability may be sufficient for successful implementation of a particular activity. A person should a lot of abilities. The combination of abilities necessary for successful performance of a certain activity is called giftedness.

¹ Каташов А. І. *Педагогічні основи розвитку інноваційного освітнього середовища сучасного ліцею*: автореф. дис. ... кандидата пед. наук: 13.00.01 / А. І. Каташов. – Луганськ, 2001. s. 22

² Каташов А. І. *Педагогічні основи розвитку інноваційного освітнього середовища сучасного ліцею*: автореф. дис. ... кандидата пед. наук: 13.00.01 / А. І. Каташов. – Луганськ, 2001. s. 20

As individual abilities, giftedness can be special (to specific activities) or total (to different activities). Giftedness is a kind of a genetic measure and human capabilities of life adaptation due to experience. Key features of giftedness are maximum adaptation to the world environment, finding a solution in all cases when there are new problems which require a creative approach.

Analysis of modern psycho-pedagogical interpretations of “talent” allows us to differentiate the following types of giftedness:

- General intellectual (academic);
- Information and communication;
- Creative;
- Social endowment;
- Sporting giftedness³.

For development of each type of giftedness it is necessary to work out a system of activities included in the educational school model. Therefore, in the process of creation of an innovational model of educational environment of the institution we should consider the age and personality of students' development, allowing them to easily navigate the educational environment and better adapt to new activities. This will allow students to choose a ready-made or self-model their educational trajectory.

Gradual withdrawal of Ukrainian education system from “targeting average student” and understanding the possibilities of education for the future creator of educational “pipeline” is increasingly recognized and makes us look for new ways of working with gifted and talented children.

We should begin the work with gifted students with elementary level of a comprehensive school. It is known that all young children from birth are endowed with certain instincts and abilities. However, not all of them are developed successfully. Unnoticed opportunities gradually fade away if they are not used for the purposes. As a result, according to the researchers, the percentage of gifted children over the years dramatically reduced, if at the age of nine it is about 60-70%, then to 14 years – 30-40%, and up to 17 years – 15-20%. These data encourage our considerations⁴.

Therefore, even in elementary school it is necessary to organize developmental, creative learning environments that will reveal the natural capabilities of each child, and teachers of middle and senior management should continue with their peers and parents work for the preservation and development of the students' abilities.

In this context, the main task of the elementary school is to ensure the development of the child. Here, the sources of the entire development of the child are the two activities. Firstly, any child develops acquiring the experience and knowledge of previous generations and by involving to the wealth of modern culture. The foundation of this process is the learning activity that is aimed at child's acquiring knowledge and skills necessary for life in society. Secondly, the child in the process of development independently realizes her own opportunities through creative activities. Unlike educational creative activity is not aimed at the development of already known knowledge. It contributes to the manifestation of the child's desire for

³ Бачинська Є. М. *Механізм формування інноваційного освітнього простору в регіоні* / Є. М. Бачинська // Педагогіка і психологія. № 1 (54). 2007. с. 79

⁴ Червінська І.Б. *Вплив соціокультурного середовища на формування духовної культури особистості*. / Гірська школа Українських Карпат. 2010. № 4-5. с.332

self-analysis, initiative, self-realization, implementation of personal ideas, which are aimed at creating new ones.

A significant influence on the formation of a personality has ethno-cultural environment with its regional factors that contribute to personal development and promote personal self-development. Quite often cultural environment of personal development of the student is considered as *“the field of life and life activities of the child, which encourage its development based on the assimilation of humanistic values, personal knowledge of the world”*.

Taking into account these conditions, the pedagogical team should build the school education system in close cooperation with the natural factors without breaking a connection between a man and nature. Training without forcing, ideas of free choice and cooperative creative work of teachers, parents, students and community organizations should be embodied in the life of the institution.

The key means of developing a gifted person must be creative activity of students – active attitude to their social life and direct participation in it. Its competence includes information activities of different age groups (events of public life, the land, the village, etc.) local activity, search and research and heroic patriotic work (participation of students in search groups, excursions, meetings with old people of the area, creating historical chronicles of their village, collection of legends, songs, fairy tales, carols, personal involvement in the work of various groups, folk ensembles, preparing reports, scientific studies, lyrics, tours of museums and historical places of the native land).

As you know, education is by nature directed to the future. It becomes increasingly difficult to prepare the younger generation for life in the future society through rapid pace of scientific and technological progress, and public opinion. That school, which focuses its activities only on “today” actually prepares young school children to life in the society of “yesterday”. The refore, “it is important not to adapt training and education to a dying society, and to rescue them from society, creating and applying in practice proactive forms and innovative technology of the educational process.”⁵

One of the forms of realization scientific research on gifted children is the creation by the Department of theory and methodology of primary education in the Precarpathian National University named after Vasyl Stefanyk (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine) experimental area *“Personal development of junior pupils in a mountain environment”* as the part of the international project *“Mountain school of Ukrainian Carpathians”*. Scientists from Poland (Chelm, Lublin) and Slovakia (Levoča of the city Ružomberok) who find the problem of gifted person relevant joined the work on the research.

As a part of the research work realization of these activities is implied: *Research* – focus on a unified program of work with gifted children. *Psycho-pedagogical* – creation of diagnostic of talented students. *Research methodology and education* – exercise testing and implementation of teaching materials in psychological and pedagogical practice, finding and implementing the most effective technologies for working with gifted children. *Socio-economic* – talents’ support through the organization of the *“Student of the Year”* by presenting scholarships and grants. *Coordinating direction* – the organization of the whole school team. *Diagnostic direction* – creating the bank of methodological support to identify talents within experimental schools. *Staff direction* – definition the criteria of pedagogical work with gifted children. *Developing trend* – the creation of a favorable educational

⁵ Палчевський С. С. *Педагогіка*: Навч. посіб. Київ: Каравелла, 2008. с.366

environment for gifted children. *Information direction* – attracting attention of the educational community, government, mass media to the problems of gifted children.

Conclusions

Psycho-pedagogical conditions of the development of gifted pupils are preparing creative environment to identify gifted children in every school of the country. Pupils should be given the opportunity to study in part-time, full-part-time and distance learning schools that allow them regardless of residence absorb programs of profile training. The system of competitions and contests with the pupils' participation should be given a special attention; mechanisms of considering individual pupils' achievements in admission to higher educational establishments should be perfected.

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